



Police looking into 33-year-old death at Elan School

By The Associated Press

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Authorities told Pam Newell in 1982 her brother, Phil Williams Jr., died from a brain aneurysm. She said she only learned two weeks ago that he had been forced into the infamous boxing ring at the Elan School the day before he died, the Sun Journal (<http://bit.ly/1pLHWB7>) reported.

"There's a lot of information that needs to be gathered," Maine State Police spokesman Steve McCausland said Tuesday. "A great deal of time has elapsed since the teenager's death."

Forced fighting was among several controversial therapies employed by the school, which closed in 2011. The practice emerged during Kennedy cousin Michael Skakel's 2002 murder trial in Connecticut.

Former student Ann Bowen told the newspaper Newell's brother was pummeled by teenagers wearing boxing gloves as punishment because staff members thought he was faking a headache. Another former student, Laura Allemang, said she remembers Williams going into convulsions.

The school in Poland, Maine, was founded by the late Joe Ricci, a former heroin addict, and the late Gerald Davidson, a psychiatrist.

Several former school officials said they'd never heard of the allegations.

The death certificate for Williams cites a probable brain aneurysm as the source of "brain stem compression" and "massive cerebral hemorrhage." An aneurysm is a weakening of the wall of an artery or vein wall that can cause death in the event of a rupture.

McCausland said another former student from Chicago came to him with the same allegation that a boxing match preceded the teen's death. He said they were forwarded to the major crimes unit, which is looking into the death.

Williams ended up at Elan after he and his sister, both from Auburn, became wards of the state and were sent to a foster home in Rockland after their father was imprisoned. Williams was sent to the Maine Youth Center, then to the Elan School, after getting into trouble.

Newell said she and her father, now 74, want answers.

"I want to know," she said. "If he was murdered, my brother deserved justice."

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This story has been corrected to show the victim was 15, not 12, when he died.